
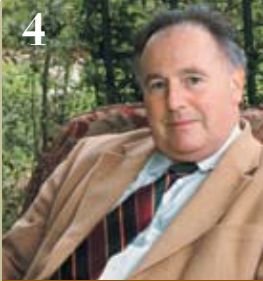





families that work

Newsletter of the Emory Center for Myth and Ritual in American Life

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MARIAL WELCOMES AFFILIATED FELLOWS FROM BOSTON AND GERMANY, AND FORMER *NEW YORK TIMES* REPORTER

The MARIAL Center has expanded its research network to scholars in Boston and Germany, as well as to a former *New York Times* reporter who will study and report on suburban life in America. These newcomers will be affiliated fellows, who will visit MARIAL occasionally to talk about their research. "We needed a designation for non-Emory people whose work was of direct interest to what was going on at MARIAL," said MARIAL Center Director Bradd Shore. "We wanted a formal connection with them." The new affiliated fellows are:

- Boston University Professor Nancy Ammerman, who studies the sociology of religion;
- Harald Welzer, a German professor who studies memory and the transmission of family history; and
- Peter Kilborn, a national correspondent for *The New York Times* who recently retired after thirty years at the paper.

The affiliated fellows will not be based at Emory but will visit MARIAL occasionally to present workshops and discuss their research findings. "The affiliates will expand the range of scholars associated with MARIAL who we can use as resources for our scholars," Shore said.

Spiritual narratives

Nancy Ammerman will begin a collaborative project with the MARIAL Center to study spiritual narratives in everyday life. She will work with Emory's Tracy Scott, research assistant professor in the Rollins School of Public Health's Department of Health Policy

and Management. They will hire students to conduct interviews in Atlanta and Boston for a project involving Boston University's Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs.

Ammerman's earlier research has found that boundaries between the sacred and the secular in American culture are permeable and don't always fit into neat categories. A spiritual narrative could include a wide range of topics and may not necessarily involve a mention of God, she found. Spiritual narratives also may occur outside places of worship, such as work or home.

"One of the reasons to look for narratives is that it's the way most people make sense of their everyday lives," Ammerman said. "We're not looking for people to say God created the world and God has a purpose for my life, and this is how I understand what happened today in my life." A spiritual narrative could be as small as someone saying, "You were really blessed," after being told of something special happening, such as the purchase of a house or an another hallmark of good fortune.

"We're looking for the stories that bring together the spiritual with work, family, and other aspects of a person's life," Ammerman said. She also will look at how religion, and religious experiences, are different in Atlanta and Boston. Her project, funded by the Templeton Foundation, will involve 100 participants, half in Boston and half in Atlanta.

A "religious life history," such as whether a person belongs to a religious congregation or regularly attends religious services, will be taken for each participant. They will be asked to keep oral diaries about their everyday lives, such as what happened that day, what is